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CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
1 APRIL 1976

Congress endeavors to centralize intelligence

By the Associated Press

Washington

Senate efforts to create a single panel to monitor U.S. intelligence agencies are in disarray because of reluctance of other committees to relinquish their powers over segments of the intelligence community.

The jurisdictional dispute threatens to sabotage the stated goal of proposed legislation to form a new committee as a means of "centralizing oversight of the intelligence community."

Senior members of the Senate Judiciary and Armed Services committees are expected to urge the Senate Rules Committee not to strip them of their current authority over the CIA, FBI, and other intelligence agencies.

Also scheduled to testify is CIA director George Bush, who administration officials say, is concerned that the Senate may increase, not decrease, the number of committees he would be required to brief on intelligence operations.

One administration official described the effort to centralize the monitoring of intelligence agencies as "going 180 degrees in the opposite direction."

A resolution that would create a new committee with exclusive jurisdiction over the intelligence community was approved earlier by the Senate Government Operations Committee. The committee's analysis of the resolution states that "other committees that formerly had jurisdiction over the intelligence agencies would not continue to have jurisdiction."

The report explained that a single committee with exclusive jurisdiction was needed to "provide a more orderly working relationship between Congress and the executive branch." Reducing the number of committees would remove "unnecessary burdens on the time of agency officials" and would improve security by cutting the number of people with access to intelligence secrets, it said.

On Tuesday (March 30), the Judiciary Committee agreed to ask the rules panel to allow it to retain exclusive jurisdiction over the FBI. At the same time, the Armed Services Committee decided to demand continued responsibility over all forms of intelligence related to national security, including the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Senate committee mum on secret CIA probes?

Washington

The Senate Intelligence Committee has decided to keep secret its investigations of controversial Central Intelligence Agency operations, according to committee sources.

The committee intends to release its report in mid-April in the form of general recommendations to curb some questionable CIA activities, but the operations themselves will not be mentioned, the sources said.